

47
THE
POINT OF HONOR.

A P L A Y,

IN THREE ACTS.

TAKEN FROM THE FRENCH,

AND PERFORMED WITH UNIVERSAL APPLAUSE
AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

—♦—
BY CHARLES KEMBLE.
—♦—

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY THOMAS BURNSIDE,

FOR P. WOGAN, J. BOYCE, W. PORTER, W. JONES, J. MILLIKEN,
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J. WHITWORTH, J. STOCKDALE,
J. PARRY, J. SHEA, AND
T. CODD.

—♦—
1800.



1609 / 4477

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

SPOKEN BY MR. BARRYMORE.

WHEN novelty's the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on because they're strange,
When from received opinions to depart,
Is the first canon of dramatic art,
How shall he fare whose un aspiring hack
Jogs on the broad way and the beaten track,
Leaps o'er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?

Though bards more bold like devious comets fly
In paths eccentric through the boundless sky,
Scorn not our Author's less ambitious flight,
Whose orbit's humbler, if more true his light;
Think not his morals too severely nice.
If not one tear be claimed for suffering vice;
If no false virtue's dangerous disguise
Veil her loath'd image from your cheated eyes.
Not ours the maxims of the liberal school,
Whose bold exceptions supersede all rule;
But Virtue here, throughout each trying scene,
Rears 'midst the storm her high commanding mien;

Say

PROLOGUE.

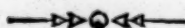
Say *must* he fail who makes his sole appeal
To passions which the simplest heart may feel?
Has Guilt, redeem'd by sentimental show,
Monopoliz'd each source of tender woe?
And must your eyes on *principle* be dry,
When chaste Affection heaves her *purser* sigh?
No—till your hearts shall sympathizing share
The pious anguish of a Sire's despair,
Who weeps, yet glories in a blameless Son,
By laws too rigid, not by guilt undone,
And own the palm well-earned o'er Love by Honor won.



2

2

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ. (



Chevalier de St: Franc,	{ Officers under the old govern- ment of France. }	Mr. BARRYMORE.
Valcour, -		Mr. FAWCETT.
Durimel, -		Mr. C. KEMBLE.
Steinberg, -		Mr. SUETT.
First Officer, -		Mr. TRUEMAN.
Second Officer, -		Mr. ATKINS.
Zenger, -		Mr. KLANERT.
Steibel, -		Mr. CHIPPINDALE.
Keeper of the Prison, -		Mr. ABBOTT.
Mrs. Melfort, -	-	Miss CHAPMAN.
Bertha, -	-	Miss DE CAMP.

The action passes in a small town upon the German frontier.

John Ashitores Book
placed Apr 11th 1803

Now Jane Hardings Book
THE POINT OF HONOR.

Trange May 14th - 1811

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Mrs. Melfort's house.—
Tables, chairs, &c. &c.*

Mrs. Melfort and Steinberg meeting.

Stein. SO, so, so! fine times these! soldiers without end; infantry, cavalry, dragoons, light troops, hussars, baggage-waggons, and the devil knows what, pouring in upon us! Well, I foresaw it all! Don't you remember, Mrs. Melfort, what I predicted last Wednesday was two years, when I read you the gazette of the 6th of March? I foresaw that this would become the seat of war—I foresaw the whole plan as well as they who designed it: I make no doubt, now, but the enemy will compel us to shew our joy at their arrival, by a voluntary illumination and public rejoicings.

Mrs. Melf. Better so than to behold our streets streaming with blood; and the four corners of our poor little town delivered to the flames.

Stein.

Stein. What ! admit the foe without resistance ? I love my country, madam ; I am a patriot ; you understand me ?

Mrs. Melf. Indeed, sir, I do not ; pray explain yourself.

Stein. Well then, madam, the protection you have afforded that young Frenchman, whom you have made in a manner one of your family, sufficiently evinces your partiality to his whole nation, and his insolence keeps pace with your——

Mrs. Melf. Sir, sir ; the person you speak of is a young man of extraordinary merit ; he is prudent, economical, intelligent ; nor was it possible for me to find a person better calculated to conduct my affairs : add to which, he was unfortunate, and that alone had been sufficient claim on my protection.

Stein. Well, I have done : but you don't know what reports are in circulation—all your friends are shocked at them.

Mrs. Melf. Reports ! and pray what are they ?
(*smiling.*)

Stein. Why, they go so far as to talk of marriage between him and your daughter ; and you may well suppose——

Mrs. Melf. Yes, sir, I can well suppose that such reports are calculated to give uneasiness : and to put an end to them at once, Durimel shall call her wife to morrow.

Stein. I'm astonished ! Why, madam, what can induce you to——

Mrs. Melf. The reports of which you were just speaking—reports you know, Mr. Steinberg, are dangerous.

Stein.



Stein. I can bear no more; here's gratitude to the man who generously offered to rid you out of the cares of widowhood.—I did think you would have no objection to me as a son, whatever might be your reason for rejecting me as a husband.

Mrs. Melf. I believe, sir, you have frequently heard me say, that I thought no sacrifice too great to secure my daughter's happiness: I am now about to do it: imagine, then, how great must be my satisfaction in reflecting, that instead of raising a blush on my daughter's cheek, in beholding the ceremony of her mother's nuptials, I shall now appear with honour at the celebration of hers.

Stein. Then I have been completely deceived in my expectations? I who never——

Mrs. Melf. We cannot know every thing, sir; and he who, in reading a gazette, knows so well how to predict the future revolutions of Europe, often prophesies extremely ill when he reads in the eyes of a young girl—but she is here; I will inform her of what has passed, and should you be fortunate enough to succeed with her, I promise you I will not in any way oppose her inclinations.

Enter *Bertha.*

My dear Bertha, you are come very *à-propos*: Mr. Steinburg insists on having you for his wife. What say you? Do you approve of him for your husband?

Ber. For any thing else in the world—but for a husband, oh, no, dear madam.

Mrs. Melf. What are your objections?

Ber.

Ber. Oh ! do not ask me : you know as well as I do : to you I confide the most secret wishes of my soul ; and I have already avowed——

Mrs. Melf. Proceed.

Ber. What ! name him ? Oh ! you know him well.

Stein. What ! Miss Bertha, a fellow who comes from I don't know where, who has not a shilling to bless himself with ; an adventurer ; and you can prefer him to me ? really, madam, a prudent mother owes it to her child not to suffer her to be guilty of so much folly.

Mrs. Melf. You hear what Mr. Steinberg says, my dear ; so answer for yourself.

Stein. Reflect, my dear Miss Bertha, how terrible it will be to have all my expectations crushed ; I who have lived seven long years in hope.

Ber. Live so still, my dear Mr. Steinberg ; for all who hope are happy ; and, I fear, you would no longer be so if we were married : our ages, our tastes, our sentiments, all differ ; we shall live much better as friends : be generous then ; speak to me no more of love, and your friendship will be still the dearer to me.

Stein. (*sighing*). Ah ! Miss Bertha, I remember you quite an infant ; I watched, with rapture, the growth of your charms : and now you disdain me ; you reject me—me who would have left you every thing I have in the world—me who am so old a friend too.

Ber. Is it not natural, sir, at my age, to prefer a younger friend ?

Stein. Very well, miss, very well ! and so you prefer a beggar—a—— If I cared less
about

about you I could inform you, but I won't ; no, no ; I've done ; ingratitude is worse than——

Mrs. Melf. Come, come ! no enmity ; my daughter has acquainted you with her sentiments, then do not blame her, if her heart——

Stein. Don't tell me—don't tell me : there's nothing but ingratitude upon the face of the earth—how the world's changed ! perverted ! ah ! what's become of your poor deceased husband ? he would not have used me thus ; he was my friend—he was a man of good sense and enlightened understanding ; it is but too plain he is no longer here. Bad world ! nothing but ingratitude, cruelty, and treason.

[*Exit Steinberg, and returns almost immediately unperceived.*]

Mrs. Melf. His exclamations fatigue me ; (*During this speech Steinberg returns, as if about to speak ; but perceiving himself to be the subject of conversation, retires to a closet in the flat, where he overhears the rest of the scene,*) yet they are excuseable ; I cannot bear to see distress, even in those who do not respect the sensibility of others.

Stein. 'Tis of me they are talking, and I should like to know their opinion of me—listeners, they say, hear no good of themselves.—I'll try the truth of that remark (*goes into the closet*).

Ber. What a difference between him and Durimel ! Oh ! my dear mother, 'tis you who create my happiness and his : what unaffected sincerity he possesses ! you were ever decided in his favour, and I derive so much pleasure from

from that decision, that I sometimes fear a change in your sentiments. This place is full of envy.

Mrs. Melf. Banish your fears, my child: I believe him to be worthy of your love: and, in uniting your fortunes, how sweet will it be to me to pay the debt of gratitude I owe him, in a manner so congenial with my feelings! Be to him equable, complaisant and affable: dispel the smallest cloud which threatens to obscure the sunshine of your peace: women have not force for their inheritance; candour and an affecting softness are their only arms. Avoid caprice; it is the rock on which our happiness is often wrecked; and in the married state, trifles light, and even imperceptible at first, contain the dreadful seed of dangerous discord: continue, then, your confidence in me, that my experience may assist you to prevent or dissipate the storms which may arise.

Ber. I see no clouds, nor do I dread a storm; the sun of happiness shines full upon me, and brightens all my prospects.

Mrs. Melf. You are now, dear Bertha, on the point of entering into duties, the sweetest, sure, of life, but not the less important: summon, then, all your courage; be prepared for all events, for to-morrow you become the wife of Durimel.

Ber. With what care, with what anxious tenderness, you watch over my happiness.

Mrs. Melf. Here he comes: we shall raise him to the summit of felicity; but I fear the height will turn his brain.

Ber.

Ber. 'Tis he; but I dread to—I have not power—I—permit me to withdraw.

(*Exit Bertha.*)

Mrs. Mel. (calling.) Bertha! Bertha!—
Ah! she's gone.

Enter Durimel.

Dur. My presence was perhaps the occasion of her flight, madam; if so, it would have been a rudeness to have held her. I fear I have interrupted you.

Mrs. Mel. Not in the least, not in the least; she will not always shun you thus (*smiling.*) Hear me, Durimel; it is time to bestow upon your merit, your attachment to our interests, and a sentiment, the rise and growth of which I have with pleasure mark'd, the sweet reward which you expect, and I, with truth, can say, is but your due. What ails you?—why are you silent?—have you any disagreeable news to communicate?—some delay, some failure among our correspondents?

Dur. No madam; your affairs are in a more flourishing condition than ever I remember them; the books which I delivered to you yesterday, must have convinced you of the truth of what I say.

Mrs. Mel. What can this mean; to be so sad at such a moment, when all things smile around you! Tell me, Durimel, has not your heart a secret presage of the happiness which now awaits you?

Dur. (sighs.) No, madam; I can no longer cheat myself into a belief that there is any happiness for me.

B

Mrs.

Mrs. Mel. Durimel, I am no stranger to your love ; the nobleness of your sentiments has acquired my most sincere esteem : then take my daughter ; I give her to you ; to-morrow she shall be yours.

Dur. Oh ! madam, how ignorant are you of the situation of my soul ! True, I have dared in secret to cherish the sweet hope. Bertha ! I adore her ; but, in the name of all your bounty, I conjure you, tell me she sincerely loves—she loves as I love her ;—tell me, my benefactress, my guardian angel, tell me ; for my future destiny hangs on it.

Mrs. Mel. If I should tell you, will you be more discreet, more composed ? You are no longer the same person. Yes, dear Durimel, my daughter's heart is yours entirely.

Dur. Then I defy you, Fate ; she loves me : to-morrow I may call her by the tender name of wife : shall I then fly from her, to end my days in sorrow and despair ? No : though loss of life should be the price of such supreme delight, I'll stay, I'll die content.

Mrs. Mel. Die ! you have fill'd my mind with terror. Should you be unfortunate—

Dur. Unfortunate ! have you not bestow'd your daughter on me ? but you do not know me ; you might, however, have suspected, that a voluntary exile does not quit the cherished scenes of his birth without a cause : who knows whether a single word will not recal the blind partiality which pleads in my behalf ; whether Bertha herself will not reject, nay blush, for having loved me.

Mrs. Mel. Reject you ! Oh ! no, dear Durimel ; I cannot be deceived : if I have never
fought

fought to make you break the silence you have imposed upon yourself, t'was from a firm conviction that the virtues you possess could never spring from a corrupted heart : from what you are, I judge of what you have been—what you will be. The husband of Bertha, you become my son : now guard your secret, or confide it to a mother's breast : you are at liberty to choose.

Dur. I am unable to resist, I was about to quit you. Start not, but summon all your fortitude to hear, as I must to relate my story. Rear'd far from the tender eyes of a parent, it is but rarely I've enjoy'd the blessing of embracing him, at sixteen years of age, deprived of all resource, and animated by the example of my father, I follow'd the career of arms : in performing the painful duties of my station, my courage never fail'd ; and yet, how frequent were the occasions to exercise it. It was my lot to serve under a colonel the most oppressive, the most inflexible of men ; five years of patience had I pass'd beneath his iron yoke, when, oh ! fatal moment unjustly molested, my blood began to boil ; I answer'd sharply, and receiv'd a blow—disgraceful outrage ! which, at this distant period, covers me with blushes.

Mrs. Mel. Moderate this passion, I entreat you ; it terrifies me.

Dur. No, I could not bear it ; an involuntary motion carried my hand to my sword, and in the moment when I thought vengeance within my reach, I became a slave ; degraded, loaded with irons, and thrust into a dungeon, my only resource was to bribe my guards, and by a sudden flight, escape the humiliating, loathed ceremony

mony, of asking pardon for an injury received : I was instantly denounced, pursued, declared a deserter, and adjudged to death.

Mrs. Mel. To death ! oh ! heaven.

Dur. A wandering outcast, I arrived upon the German frontier : Fortune then seem'd to smile in offering me an asylum under your hospitable roof, where seven years have roll'd away in peace ; but, in the happiest moment of my life, the most desired, the war conducts the very regiment hither which bears my sentence ; my judges are at your door, madam ; once known, my doom is certain.

Mrs. Mel. Flight would be dangerous.

Dur. Flight ! oh, if I fly I must abandon all that's dear to me ; upon such terms life is not worth the having, and I will stay and die with Bertha.

Mrs. Mel. Conceal yourself within the house ; these regiments must soon give place to others ; and this asylum, without doubt, is preferable to any.—Haste then, this instant, and conceal yourself.

Dur. But, Bertha——

Mrs. Mel. Be careful not to let a single word escape you ; if you should, her fears will ruin all ! we will acquaint her with the danger when it is over : appear before her, but with prudence ; do not seem to fear, but let your carriage——

Enter a Servant of Mrs. Melfort.

Serv. Madam, the regiments have entered the town—two officers are billeted on us, and here is the order.

Mrs.

Mrs. Mel. Prepare two chambers instantly at the far end of the corridor, and let nothing be wanting. *[Exit Servant.]*

Dur. Alas! what trouble have I brought upon you! Why did you not place your tenderness on one more fortunate?

Mrs. Mel. Think you I loved you only when you were happy? do me not so much injustice;—but come; you must instantly retire to the apartment behind the manufactory.—Calm your terrors; confide in me; and with a mother's anxious care I'll watch over, and conceal your safe retreat from every eye.

[Exeunt Mrs. Melfort and Durimel.]

Enter Steinberg from Closet.

Stein. Except mine—what I have just heard will do; 'tis good, very good.—Now, my young Frenchman, I may chance to be even with you; for tho' I lose my mistress, I shall find my revenge; and will not forego the opportunity. *[Exit Steinberg.]*

SCENE II.---A Hall.

Servants cross the stage with portmanteaus.

Enter St. Franc and Valcour.

Val. Now, Major, confess ; are we not in high fortune, to fall so snugly under the roof of a handsome widow whose daughter is an angel ? you shall attack the widow, chevalier ; methinks I already overhear you in a charming *tête-à-tête*, relating the most interesting passages of your youth ; I am told she's a charming woman, and I give you my honor, if (by the description) her daughter were not ten times more to my taste, I should not so easily consign her to you.

St. Franc. Valcour, in the pleasure of triumphing over women, you seem to forget that the enemy remains unconquered.

Val. Far from it, my dear Major ; 'tis love alone can make a hero of me ; it amuses, it enflames me ; I must be active, and till our duty calls us to the field, how can my busy, restless mind, find sweeter employment ?—this divine creature once subdued, I'll prove a thunderbolt of war.

St. Franc. And can you then thus coolly meditate——

Val. Coolly ! say you ? I'm all on fire ; my heart's in a blaze.

St. Franc. So it has been in every different town we've entered ; yours is a most uncommon heart, my friend ; the fire so many times expe-

experienced must have reduced it almost to a cinder.

Val. True, Major ;—but, phoenix-like, it rises from the ashes replete with tenfold vigour.

St. Franc. But consider, Valcour, we are under the roof of a respectable woman, whose daughter is both beautiful and virtuous ; think then how disastrous may be the consequences of your irregular and wild desires.

Val. Disastrous ! ha, ha, ha !

St. Franc. Even to yourself, young man ! Think you so lightly then of bringing misery upon a lovely innocent young creature, whose own simplicity and natural goodness inspire a confidence in all around her ? think you that remorse, more bitter than the tears you cause to flow, will cease to sting and goad the heart, which, for a passing mementary joy, embitters all the future hours of a life which else had flown away in peace and virtue ? Never believe it : a widow's cries to the offended Deity for vengeance on her child's seducer, shall fall in thunder on the wretch who basely wronged her noble hospitality, and robbed her of the stay and comfort of her age.

Val. Bravo, major ! By my honor, the chaplain of the regiment would find it difficult to produce so good a sermon.

St. Franc (with great reserve). If you please sir, we will choose another subject.

Val. Content, say I ; for in spite of all this giddiness, this folly, my heart assures me you are in the right.

St. Franc. The Council appears much irritated at the late desertions.

Val.

Val. And not without reason, I think ; in three days seven and twenty from one company !——I fear they will make some terrible example to stop the further progress of the evil.

St. Franc. And yet, however necessary may be the example is it not terrible to turn the arms which oft have gained them victories, against the hearts of those who bore them ? Valcour, I am filled with horror at this bloody preparation ; the bare mention of a deserter chills my very soul ; think, then, how dreadful is the charge allotted me, to give the fatal signal for their deaths—to see their straining eyes fixed eagerly on mine, to the last moment, hoping a reprieve—oh ! 'tis too horrible.—Their judges should, like me, have risen by length of service from the common ranks—like me, have felt the ills which private soldiers feel—then might the life of many a wretch be spared to fight his country's battles still, and call down blessings on them for their mercy.

Val. Why do they not send them home to cultivate their native peaceful vales, and for us reserve the dangers and the glory of the fight ? then would desertion be unknown among us ; as prompt as terrible, we should fly to victory ; and the intrepid band might fall in slaughtered heaps upon the bloody plain, but never would desert it.—Ah ! here comes our charming hostess ; Allons, Chevalier, I'll introduce you.

Enter

Enter Mrs. Melfort.

Chance, dear madam, often disposes of us much better than we could of ourselves; and we are infinitely her debtors for having thrown us on your hospitable shore; she has conducted us to the abode of beauty, knowing that we had eyes to dinguish, and hearts disposed to do it homage.

Mrs. Mel. I know not how to answer to such high-flown compliment—the apartments I have ordered to be prepared are ready for your reception; shall I attend you to them?

Val. You are a most adorable creature; and wherever our apartment may chance to be, if you are but our own neighbour, we shall be delighted with it. To tell you the truth, I can't bear solitude; it makes me hypochondriacal; and you Germans are so fond of lodging one at the end of corridors a mile in length, that I have sometimes, in my melancholy fit, supposed myself the plague, thrust into a remote corner of the house to prevent my being caught. With a little humouring I'm as gentle as a lamb; but fierce—implacable, if provoked.—But where madam, is your enchanting daughter? in whose praise no tongue is silent—the power of whose charms all hearts have felt? Why major! are you making game of us?

St. Franc. What extravagance! what folly!

Val. Ah! madam, you do not know the meaning of those impatient shrugs. The mere description of your daughter has bewitched him.

him. Why is she not with you? Why does Love's offspring shun its mother? Have you commanded her absence? I hope not; for if you have, he'll be outrageous: he has been breathing nothing but flames and darts. There, there ---don't you see how much he's agitated?—Don't think of concealing her from him, for his vehemence is excessive; and, if once enraged, he becomes a madman.

St. Franc. From what you have just uttered, the lady might fairly infer that you were one already.—I flatter myself, however, madam, that while we have the pleasure of remaining under your roof you will have no cause to complain of the conduct of your guests.

Mrs. Mel. We shall be friends, I make no doubt; and, to shew you that I have no fears on my daughter's account, I will immediately introduce her to you.—Who waits?

Enter Servant.

Tell my daughter I wish to speak with her.—*[Exit Servant.]* Though I assure you I am loath to interrupt her, for 'tis a busy time; to-morrow is to be her wedding-day.

Val. To-morrow! oh, don't think of it; you are too precipitate. Believe me, 'twill be time enough to celebrate the nuptials when we are gone.

St. Franc. Lose not a moment, madam, in securing her future happiness. The object of her choice and your approbation must needs be worthy of her.

Val. Take care—take care, I tell you! You are too precipitate. I'll venture to assert
she

she does not prodigiously love her intended spouse.---Come, now, confess, Mrs. Melfort, she is not over head and ears in love with him.

Mrs. Mel. You'll pardon me—I think she loves him most sincerely.

Val. No—I tell you no; she may, indeed imagine that she loves him, but I assure you it is no such thing. A husband, you know, my dear ma'am, is a very convenient kind of being: but her love for him is no more to be compared with that some lovely creatures have felt for me---It was transport—madness---In short, I can't tell you what it was.

Mrs. Mel. And when your ingratitude brought them again to reason, most bitterly did they lament their folly; did they not, sir?

Val. Why, as to that—

Enter Bertha.

But here, if I mistake not, comes your daughter.—What blooming beauty!—See, major, what a lovely blush overspreads her cheek!—We are happy, madam, in—How soft is this fair hand!

Ber. Reserve for others, I beseech you, sir, these violent expressions of esteem.

St. Franc. Valcour! for Heaven's sake, consider—

Val. I have done—I have done, Major: yet, to ravish so innocent a favour cannot, surely, be a crime.

St. Franc. Let us retire to our apartments: we have no time to lose.

Val.

Val. True—you say true. I may be killed to-morrow; so I'll e'en make the most of to-day.—They tell me, my angel, you are going to be married: but if I may be thought worthy to advise, you will defer—

St. Franc. I have business with you, and you must come. Every moment, now, is precious.

Valcour (*suffers himself to be led by St. Franc.*).

Oh! if you have business that must be attended to—She is unacquainted with half her worth! Did you ever see any thing so beautiful, chevalier? What a complexion! How fine is the turn of that neck! How graceful the whole demeanor! She's a figure for an officer; and then, to throw herself away upon a——But as I have not had the pleasure of knowing the gentleman I won't abuse him.

St. Franc. Follow me this instant, Valcour, or I lose all patience.

Val. I come—I come chevalier! A little mercy on my bones, dear major!—Aye, by my honor, a figure for an officer!

St. Franc. Shame on you, Valcour! You'll bring disgrace upon the name.

[*Exeunt St. Franc. and Valcour.*]

Mrs. Mel. Come, come, my child, let us retire, and avoid his insolence.

Ber. What are we to expect from the licentious soldiery, when e'en their chiefs, forgetting what is due to female delicacy, can thus disturb the peace of helpless families, and injure those it is their duty to protect.

Enter

Enter Durimel.

Dur. They are retired, and I may at length appear. With what impatience have I waited for this moment!

Mrs. Melf. (*aside*) Imprudent Durimel! why have you ventured out? If you should be discov—

Ber. What say you, mother?

Mrs. Melf. Nothing, my child.

Ber. But you were about to say something;—and you, too, Durimel, seem agitated. Ah! I am no longer happy! Why did you refuse to appear with me before these officers, your countrymen? Why keep yourself concealed? Had you been here, they would not have insulted us.

Dur. Insulted you! Have they then dared to——

Mrs. Melf. Bertha! seek not to be acquainted with his motives; let it content you that I know them—Is not your happiness my only care? Why, then, persist in an inquiry?

Ber. I have done, dear madam; in all I will obey you.

Mrs. Melf. Give me your hand then—yours Bertha; with all my soul I give her to you—May every future hour of your lives bring a fresh tribute of felicity, and this happy union of two virtuous hearts draw down upon you heaven's choicest blessings!

Dur. Oh, Bertha! are you then mine!
(*kneels and kisses Bertha's hand.*)

C

Enter

Enter Valcour behind them.

Val. I have made my escape at last from that merciless major, and may now return to the——(*sees DURIMEL kissing the hand of BERTHA, runs and taps him on the shoulder*)—Very well, your man; very well, indeed.

Dur. Sir!

Mrs. Melf. Oh, heaven protect him!—Should he be known——

Val. So, so, ladies; it was to play me this pretty trick, you lodged me in the Antipodes; I'm your very humble servant—It was cruel though to banish me to the end of the world, when you knew I was so desirous of being your neighbour: this I presume is the intended—ha! his air is not so Germanic as I expected. By my honour, such a spark may be dangerous! And do you seriously, friend, intend to enter the lists with me? (*DURIMEL smiles in contempt, and turns up the stage.*)

Mrs. Melf. You are uncivil, Sir; your apartment is provided for you, and I must insist on your retiring.

Val. 'Tis into the heart of this lovely creature I would retire—I will accept no other asylum. Incomparable woman, behold at your feet——(*kneels, attempts to take her hand—Durimel comes between them.*) Well, Sir, whom do you stare at?

Dur. Do not provoke me to reply.

Val. What! you are about to be impertinent?

Dur. No, Sir; but I will punish your presumption, spite of the uniform which you disgrace.

Fal.

Val. A menace, by the honor of a soldier! You are not a German, I perceive.

Dur. Painful silence! how my blood boils!
(*aside.*)

Mrs. Melf. Durimel! withdraw, I beg of you.

Ber. Do, if you love me, Durimel.

Dur. Let my compliance prove my love—but think not to escape unpunished, sir; the time may yet arrive, when you shall dearly mourn this insolence.

[*Exeunt Durimel and Bertha.*]

Val. Ah! my fair fugitive; you must not thus escape me (*runs after Bertha.*)

Mrs. Melf. (*holding him*). What are you about, sir? By what authority do you presume to treat us thus? I no longer esteem you as a man of honour; and be assured I will make known your conduct through the town.

Val. By the honour of a soldier, ma'am, you are extremely strong in the wrist—methinks you make too great a fuss about so trifling an affair. If you exclaim so violently on my first approaches to the town, what will you say when it capitulates?

Mrs. Melf. To such language it is impossible for me to reply. Go, sir; and know, that the heaviest misfortune of the war, in our estimation, is the necessity we are under of admitting you beneath our roof.

[*Exit Mrs. Melfort.*]

Val. Ha, ha, ha! our worthy hostess is in a fury; and on reflection I don't much wonder at it: I am too volatile—but what the devil can a man do in a strange place like this, if he does not make himself agreeable to the ladies? But
have

have I made myself agreeable ? I fear not—it is no matter—I shall be more successful in my next attempt—Strange fellow this intended husband ! Well, I won't kill him ; but I'm resolved to pursue the adventure, as well to punish his impertinence as to procure myself amusement : for a garrison town without entertainment is the devil ; and if I had not constantly affairs of gallantry or honour on my hands, I should die in a week of the spleen.

[Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Mrs. Melfort's House.**St. Franc and Mrs. Melfort discovered seated.*

St. Franc. I ASK a thousand pardons, madam, for the behaviour of my young friend ; his spirits often run away with him ; yet, I do not think he would, upon deliberation, act dishonourably : let me, therefore entreat you to overlook the present rudeness, and I give you my honour that, for the future——

Mrs. Melf. It is entirely forgotten : if his conduct has occasioned us uneasiness, your goodness and civility have made us full amends : did your companions but resemble you, we should endure the evils of the war with greater resignation.

St. Franc. Youth cannot excuse the thoughtlessness which makes a mere amusement of a profession in itself so serious ; in which even our success should cause our tears to flow. Is it not enough to obey the terrible necessity which commands us in the fight to shut our ears against the cries of nature and of pity ; but we must, even in our hours of relaxation, wound the hearts of those who give us shelter ? How painful are to me the duties of the war ! how pleasurable those of peace ! for I may then fulfil the ardent wishes of my soul ; and

in some measure, repair the dreadful ills of which I have been the blind and fatal instrument,—by solacing the woes of suffering humanity.

Mrs. Melf. With such noble feelings how many bleeding wounds you must have closed ! how many bitter tears have dried ! you should be happy, sir.

St. Franc. The number of the happy is but small—necessity at first induced me to take arms, and it has ever been to me a hard duty. I have, indeed, attained to a condition much above my birth ; yet, still I cannot say that I am happy.

Mrs. Melf. And yet the rank you hold may give advantages many might envy. An officer, on more than one occasion, acts a distinguished part.

St. Franc. True, madam ; many an officer would think the rank which I possess an ample recompence for a life of service : how then must I be gratified, who have risen to it from the lowest situation in the army ? incorporated these five years with a different regiment from that in which I learned the rudiments of war ; almost the only one who 'scap'd the dreadful scythe of war, which mowed down my companions ; it was my chance to gather laurels, round which fell Envy's serpents twined, and raised up enemies against me more implacable, more dangerous than any I e'er encountered in the field ! Would you believe, madam, that even those who, by their birth alone, hold equal rank, can scarce endure to see me by their side ? Would you believe, I often hear them saying, in contempt, " He's
but

but an officer of fortune !” Heartless, unfeeling men ! they remember well the obscurity of my origin, but forget the scars with which my breast is covered.

Mrs. Melf. What, sir, can warriors then feel envy ?—warriors, who, together, follow the glorious career of arms, and serve one common mother ! Oh, it cannot be.

St. Franc. It is to true ; but that is not the grief which preys upon my heart—Reason lifts me far above such pitiful injustice, too common among men, and teaches me to view their little passions with disdain. More secret pains consume me ; real ones, alas ! the offspring, not of ambition, but of nature. Pardon me, madam, I should not grieve in your presence, nor trouble the serenity of your mind—you seem happy—you have a child, the joy, the comfort of her mother—you are about to marry her.

Mrs. Melf. I am, sir : the youth to whom she is destined possesses the most amiable qualities ; and, though his fortunes are inferior to my daughter’s, yet, by his virtues, he is more than equal to her.

St. Franc. Then he is worthy of her, and you are surely blest.

Mrs. Melf. Ah ! sir, apperances are oftentimes deceitful—every one has griefs, and concealment but aggravates the pain which they occasion—yet—there are often reasons that forbid a confidence, which we find ourselves disposed to hazard (*St. Franc weeps*) ; your pardon, sir, I’ve given you uneasiness.

St. Franc.

St. Franc. I feel most sensibly what you have just said, madam ; I feel we often burn with a desire of pouring out the soul before some faithful friend, whose sympathising tenderness may sooth the woes with which it is oppressed—'tis such a friend I need :---the dear companions of my early years have sunk, before me, to the grave ; and now, when I am on the point of following them, shall I contract new friendships but to see them broken ?---I am entirely surrounded by ambitious rivals, or young men profoundly occupied with trifles ; can I then, to such as these, confide my cares ?---Oh no ; you are a mother, madam ; your heart should be responsive to my own : --shall I then discover---yet wherefore should I grieve you---wherefore tell your woes, which you may pity, but cannot relieve.

Mrs. Melf. Though they admit not of a cure, it will be some relief to utter them ; and pity's gentle aid may—

St. Franc. I am, indeed, a being to be pitied---none know how much !---What are to me the honours I enjoy ?---the pleasures which attend my situation ! I had a son, madam ; a son who was to me most dear ; his birth was welcom'd but by nature, for I had only tears at that time to bestow on him ; but now, when fortune smiles upon me---when I have it in my power to make him happy, -I can no where find him---I can gain no tidings of him :---No ; I have lost him ; and in such a manner as makes me almost wish he never may again be found.
(*Loud roll of drums, accompanied by fifes*)

Enter

Enter Bertha.

Ber. Help, help! Fly to his assistance—oh! mother!

Mrs. Melf. What is the matter?

St. Franc. Speak! explain!

Ber. A guard of soldiers have seized on Durrin—

Mrs. Melf. Oh heaven!

Ber. And, with brutal violence, tear him from us, as if he had been guilty of some crime.

Mrs. Melf. Oh! sir, save him; your authority may set him free—embrace his cause, or—

St. Franc. I will espouse his cause—but, tell me, wherefore is he arrested?

Mrs. Melf. Alas! my daughter! I tremble to declare before her—retire, dear Bertha; leave us for an instant—retire, I beseech you, and confide in me.

Ber. Still, still this mystery! why am I kept in ignorance? if this concealment last, my heart will break.
[*Exit Bertha.*]

Mrs. Melf. (*kneels*). You, sir, are now my only hope—Oh! how could they discover his retreat! in heaven and you I trust: Oh! save him if it be possible—he is a deserter from your regiment.

St. Franc. Gracious heaven! how have you shaken me! my heart is still more torn—more agonized than yours. How often have I sunk with terror, lest in some wretch, like this, I should discover my unhappy boy. Oh, God! thou know'st how anxiously I wish to see, yet how

how I tremble to regain him. Should this be he---dear, cruel hope! uncertainty is insupportable; I run, I fly to end it.

[Exit St. Franc.

Mrs. Melf. What combats must I now sustain! what terrors stifle! Oh! heaven, give me courage---what brings Steinberg here?

Enter Bertha and Steinberg.

Ber. Here is my mother, sir,---now, what of Durimel.

Stein. Bless my soul, what a hurry you are in! if I were going to be shot now, you would be quite calm;---did I not always tell you he would come to no good?---you would not listen to my counsels when you might, and now it's too late. I suppose, by this time, you know the whole story of his being taken to the guard-house, and immediately recognised by an old serjeant.

Mrs. Melf. Come, come, my Bertha, we'll leave him; he only wishes to afflict us (*endeavours to lead Bertha away.*)

Ber. No, I will stay; for nothing I can learn will pain me more than this suspense.

Mrs. Melf. Oh! my dear child, pray to be ignorant of it---you will know it but too soon---arm yourself with courage---your unfortunate Durimel---

Ber. Well?---(*Mrs. Melfort endeavours to speak, but cannot.*)

Stein. Doesn't she know that he's a deserter?

Ber. A deserter! oh! heaven! *falls on her mother's neck.*

Stein.

Stein. Yes; 'twas the young officer that is billeted upon you, who informed against him—he is before the council of war now; and, by this time the whole affair is settled;—'tis impossible he should get off; and, to-morrow, on the parade, he will be—

Mrs. Mel. Leave the house, and never let me see you more;—wicked revengeful man! who triumph'st in the evils which oppress us, go and leave us to our torments.

Stein. Is it my fault that he is a deserter? I can't help his being shot, can I?

Mrs. Mel. No reply, sir; I will be obeyed.

Stein. Well, I'm going.—Bless my soul, how hasty they are! The daughter is in a hurry to let me in, and the mother to turn me out;—I think I'm even with my young rival though; he'll find I don't suffer an enemy to forage on my territory with impunity. [*Exit Steinberg,*

Ber. The dreadful secret is at last revealed. and Durimel is a deserter!—already he may be condemned and about to suffer. Oh! cruel, cruel judges! will not my tears appease you?

Mrs. Mel. Compose yourself, my dearest child! things are not so desperate as you imagine—the old officer has promised to espouse his cause; I expect him every instant:—oh, then, be calm; and learn to bear the sad vicissitudes of life.

Ber. Durimel! Durimel! what are thy present thoughts? does not thy heart now call on me? methinks I dread to see thee; feelings, before unknown, now rush into my soul, and fill it with despair and horror.

Enter

Enter Valcour.

Mrs. Mel. What do I see! Oh! let us fly.

Val. You see a man oppress'd by grief and wonder.

Ber. Monster! we curse the hour when first you passed the threshold of our door.

Mrs. Mel. How could you be so base, so cruel, as to betray a poor unhappy youth it should have been your pride to have protected? *(going.)*

Val. Who? I betray! Stay, I entreat you, stay;—you know but little of my heart—'tis my own fault; perhaps I have been indiscreet; but I swear by the honor of a man that I was ignorant of the arrest till I beheld him at the council. Oh! had you entrusted his unhappy fate to me, I might, I would have saved him.

Ber. It was not by your order then he was arrested?

Val. Cease, madam, I conjure you, to impute to me a crime so odious—I should blush to combat such a charge; if I had power to save, not one of them should perish. But I lose time; the colonel under whom he served is my own father—Do not despair—I will throw myself at his feet, embrace his knees, solicit and obtain a pardon—no repose, no tranquillity for me, till I have freed your lover, and restored him to your longing arms: 'tis thus I'll be revenged of your suspicions; 'tis thus I will compel you to confess that levity is not incompatible with feeling, nor gallantry with virtue.

[Exit Valcour.]

Ber.

Ber. Think you we may hope, mother?

Mrs. Mel. We are not yet certain of his fate.

Ber. Oh! let us fly to him—he wants us now—my heart's tormented, and I judge of his sensations by my own. If he must die, oh, let thy mercy, Heaven, strike me first, and end my wretched, wretched being.

[*Exeunt Bertha and Mrs. Melfort.*]

Scene changes to a room.

Enter St. Franc.

St. Franc. The only blow I dreaded has fallen and crush'd my every hope. Impenetrable Providence! how dark, how sorrowful hast thou rendered the end of my career. Alas! to find him was the only hope which cheered the prospect of my declining days; but to find him thus—oh! when my hand guided in peace his early years, how far was I from thinking that the same fatal hand would one day give the signal for his death—why was he not snatched from me when, sick and languishing in his cradle, I wearied heaven with prayers for his recovery? I then had 'scaped the horrors of this moment—Alas! I knew not what I then demanded! I knew not I implored for woes, whose bitter pangs would burst my poor old heart—

Enter Mrs. Melfort.

Oh! spare me, madam, spare me! I saw him, I knew him;—yes, he is my son.

Mrs. Mel. Merciful Providence!

D

St.

St. Franc. Misfortune's cruel shafts at me alone are levelled; but I may now defy the malice of my fate, for I no more am vulnerable. I shall soon become acquainted with my son; if he possess a noble mind, he will know how to die—my task will then be easy.

Mrs. Mel. Are you not one of his judges? are you not his father? surely that title, and the service you have rendered to your country—

St. Franc. Will not avail—Justice is inflexible, and knows no distinction: it is sacred only while it is blind.

Mrs. Mel. Surely the colonel under whom he served—

St. Franc. He is my most inveterate enemy, and deaf to my entreaties: then constancy support this drooping heart—No more shall these white hairs be humbled to the dust—no more my earnest prayers be spurned—Oh! no—fierce and inexorable, should I again implore, his malice would but triumph in my woes, and hasten the doom of my unhappy boy. I have saved many; but thou, poor wretch! wilt not escape, because thou art my son.

Mrs. Mel. Did he know you at the council?

St. Franc. No, madam; he has not seen me since his childhood; and was as far from thinking me in the station which I hold, as they who surrounded us were from suspecting him to be my son—it was a trying moment—yet, in my grief, I tasted of some joy; my heart was satisfied of his courage; and with pride I own'd the blood which flow'd in his veins—no meanness, no humiliation, to obtain his life; he answered

to their interrogatories with boldness, without fear; I too suppress'd, with painful art, feelings which struggled to burst forth, and saw him doom'd without a groan.

Mrs. Mel. Oh! how could you restrain the joy of making yourself known to your unhappy son? sure such a scene had melted the stern hearts of those who doom'd him, and they had given him free to the long-wish'd embrace of a dear father.

St. Franc. You know them not; all I could obtain for him was leave once more to visit this loved mansion; nor could I gain even that, till I had bound myself in the most solemn manner to answer for his person. Had I found a son unworthy of me, he never should have known his father; but, as he is, why comes he not?—why is he not already in my arms?—Oh! I will clasp him to a fond father's heaving breast; acknowledge, and then drown him with my tears.

Mrs. Mel. Shall I then see him once again? Oh, heaven!

St. Franc. I die with impatience to behold him, yet dread the moment of his arrival—I wish to be alone with him; then let me beg we may not meet with interruption: above all, keep your dear daughter from us till our interview be ended, then we will join you—Hark! I hear the tread of feet; he comes, he comes; leave me, madam, leave me, I entreat you.

[*Exit. Mrs. Melfort.*

Enter

Enter Durimel.

St. Franc. Oh, Heaven! let me but live a little while; and I with pleasure will resign the unhappy remnant of my days.

Dur. My longing eyes in vain seek Bertha; I fear to meet, yet cannot die in peace till I behold her. She can console me for my sufferings; she—she alone. But she flies me, dreads to encounter, and abandons me to my fate.—'Tis to you, sir, I am indebted for the liberty I now enjoy of once again beholding these dear scenes of happier days. They are fled. I have to entreat that to this kindness you will add another; 'tis in your power, and I am confident you will. You seem'd of all my judges most touched at my misfortunes; they are great; alas! You see me weep, but 'tis not for myself. Oh, my unhappy father! what will become of thee, should Heaven have prolonged thy days? Thy poor old heart will surely break, when thou shalt bear my lamentable end! (*Takes out a letter.*) Grant, Heaven the sentiments expressed in this may soothe the agonies which he must feel! He shall find I followed the noble precepts he instilled into my soul; and to the last moment, cherished virtue, honour, and religion.

St. Franc. What do I suffer! (*aside.*)

Dur. The name of my father is the only assistance I can give you in the search. He serves in a regiment which, having suffered greatly, has been since incorporated with another; the name of which I do not know. I
entreat

entreat you not to neglect it. You have, perhaps, a son; if so——

St. Franc. I have! I have!

Dur. Then, by the love you bear him, I conjure you to be active in your inquiries after my dear, loved father. Promise me this, and I shall die in peace.

St. Franc. Give me the letter. (*Durimel gives the letter. St. Franc reads it. Durimel fixes his eyes stedfastly on him; and St. Franc, extending his trembling arms, exclaims*) My poor, poor Charles!

Dur. Oh, Heaven! is it possible that——

St. Franc. What! dost thou hesitate? For many a year thou hast eluded my embrace; then torture me no more, but fly, at length, into these old, fond arms, and clasp, oh, clasp thy father!

(*They rush into each others arms, and remain for some time silent.*)

Dur. My father! in such a moment! Kind Heaven, I thank thee! (*falls at St. Franc's feet and embraces his knees.*)

St. Franc. Dost thou forget the moment which must follow? Charles wilt thou preserve this courage to the last?

Dur. I have resolved it. Yet should some fond regret linger about my breast, and shake the firmness of my soul, it is from you, my father, I expect a look which shall recal the courage of your son, and teach him how to die.

St. Franc. Dost thou not know 'tis I must give the signal for thy death? Heaven knows, many a poor wretch, like thee, has found in

me a father. In each of them I thought that I embraced a son. Shall I, then, lose the fruit of all the pains I have endured? Oh, no! 'twill cost my life; but all that should endear it to me will be lost; and I shall bless the pitying hand that strikes, and puts a period to my woes.

Dur. I was about to die in peace; but now the love of life revives within my breast, and all my resolution staggers. I have found a father! Scarce have I time to bathe his venerable hand with tears of joy, when pitiless fate summons me to the spot where my grave already is prepared.

St. Franc. Thy griefs are great—I feel them all; together we must learn to conquer them: then murmur not, but unto Providence submit——

Dur. I will submit—without a groan I'll die. This seems to me an easy task; but, without a murmur, to renounce the blessings which awaited me---the dearest object of my affections—is far beyond my strength; then give her to me---let me but call her wife, and then——

St. Franc. Well, be it so. Your marriage may be solemnized.-----Heaven forbids not hope; it is the only treasure of the wretched, then who could be so savage as to rob them of it?---But say, my son---what sacrifice hast thou yet made to offer to that God, before whose awful throne thou shortly must appear? 'Tis not enough to yield submissive to the blow which we cannot avoid; another sacrifice is necessary---a voluntary sacrifice; the following
hour

hour is almost thy last, yet hast thou dared to dedicate it to another!

Dur. Oh, my dear father! can we offend the Being we adore by ties so pure---when formed, too, in his sacred name? Together we will bless him, for thus permitting us to be united before our everlasting separation. Think not that selfishness inspires the wish; oh, no! the motive is more pure----more worthy. When I shall be no more, what sympathising friend will dry my Bertha's falling tears---will soothe my father's bitter anguish? Our marriage solemnized, she finds in you a father, you have still a child; and I shall then submit with humble resignation to my fate.

St. Franc. What, if this moment thou wert ordered forth?----what, if thou should'st no more behold thy Bertha?---would'st thou with firm and manly step march forth to undergo thy sentence?

Dur. If you, my father should command it---if such must be my fate-----

St. Franc. Well?

Dur. A sigh would sure break forth, but still I would submit.

St. Franc. Then follow me, my son---follow thy father to the fatal spot; for thou must die within this hour.

Dur. Die! Oh, Heaven!

St. Franc. Let us quit the house without tumult. Avoid the cries, the tears, the wild despair of these beloved innocents, and meet thy fate without the pangs of parting.

Dur. Oh, God! my heart is breaking!

St. Franc. Dost thou follow, Charles?

Dur.

Dur. An instant, dearest father—but an instant!

St. Franc. Thou tremblest; thy courage falters, and thy promise was above thy strength.

Dur. It was---it was! (*after a struggle*) yet still I will perform it. Oh, Heaven! accept the agonies of a torn heart. Bertha! beloved Bertha! what will become of thee? We should have been united----Oh, cruel separation!----But though thou art not suffered to hear my parting words, I will be near thee still; death has no empire o'er the soul, and mine shall hover round thee.----Now----now, my father, seize these trembling hands, and tear me from the spot!

St. Franc. Hold, Charles---it is enough; the sacrifice is now accomplished, and Heaven demands no more. Thou shalt again behold thy Bertha, and to thy grave bear with thee the sacred name of husband. Enjoy the happiness which still awaits you, and forget the fatal hour we expect until it sound.

Dur. You have recalled me from the tomb! Shall I again behold her---again enfold her in these arms?----Oh, Heaven! when the last hour shall arrive, my father, dread not to encounter your now happy son: he will be ready; and when the heavy, awful drum shall roll the signal for his death, without a sigh he'll bend him to his fate, and not disgrace his sire! [*Exeunt.*]

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

SCENE I.—Steinberg's House.

Enter Steinberg in a morning gown and slippers as if hastily roused from his bed; speaks as he enters to Zenger, who follows him.

Steinberg (*with a letter in his hand*).

VERY well, it is all very well—I'll give you the answer directly [*Exit Zenger*].—What can this mean? I hope he has not heard of the improper use I made of his name; if he should, I am ruined—let me see—let me see—(*reads*)

“SIR,

“Unless you instantly send the most satisfactory and submissive apology for the insult you have put upon me, I shall send those who will bestow on you the chastisement your insolence deserves; I would inflict it in person; but you have so far degraded yourself by your unmanly conduct, that I scorn descending even to punish you.

“VALCOUR.”

Oh dear, oh dear! what will become of me?
what

what shall I do?—if I send the apology, 'twill be a confession of my infamy, and the entire ruin of my credit will ensue—if, on the other hand, I do not send, I shall have my throat cut by a black-looking grenadier as high as a halbred.—Oh dear! oh dear! what shall I do to get out of this alarming scrape?—I had better make my escape—Matthias—Zenger, the intelligence I have conveyed to the troops who have just quitted the town, respecting those who now occupy it, will ensure me a favorable reception with them—why, Zenger! Zenger! I say.

Enter Zenger.

Zen. Bless me, sir; what ails you? how alarmed you look; why, you are quite pale; what has terrified you so?

Stein. Alarmed! pale! why 'tis enough to make a man pale, to be dragged out of bed in the middle of his first sleep——terrified, indeed! my courage, I believe, was never doubted.

Zen. Ah! now you are yourself again—but, sir, have you written an answer to the letter I gave you just now? the man who brought it is quite impatient to be gone—he says his master will murder him if he stays.

Stein. I'm all over in a cold sweat.

Zen. Lord! sir, how your colour comes and goes to-day; why now you are as white as a sheet again.

Stein. Am I? how odd that is now; my cheeks quite burn.

Zen.

Zen. What shall I say to the young man?—he dares not stay any longer—his master is so very passionate.

Steinberg (aside). I'm glad of it—I shall gain time by this at any rate—you may tell the young man he need not wait—I'll send you with the answer when it is ready—and, do you hear, make all the haste you can in packing up, for I am resolved to leave town this very day. (*Exit Zenger.*)—Bless my soul! these soldiers are so hasty (*loud knocking*). Oh Lord! Oh, what's that? If he should already have sent his myrmidons—

Enter Zenger, shewing in two Officers ; speaks as he enters.

Zen. This way gentlemen; there is my master.

[*Exit Zenger.*

Stein. Soldiers! Oh, I'm a dead man.

First Officer. We wait on you, Sir, in consequence of a letter—

Stein. Yes, Sir, a letter—What will become of me? (*aside.*) I was just considering—

First Officer. The business requires no consideration;—an immediate answer is all we want.

Stein. I had better make the apology at once, for I may then have a chance of escaping in a whole skin (*aside*). Well gentlemen, your commands shall be obey'd—I will write the answer directly.

First Officer. You need not give yourself that trouble; all we demand is a verbal answer to

to a very simple question: Do you acknowledge this to be your hand writing? — your name, I think, is Augustus Steinberg? (*taking out a letter.*)

Stein. Yes, Sir, Augustus is my name. Why what a mistake have I made! 'tis quite a different business I find—some contract for the army I suppose (*aside*).

Second Officer. And that you confess to be your hand-writing?

Stein. Yes; that certainly is my writing; I could swear to it by the A's and the G's—no one forms the letter A as I do.

First Officer. Enough, Sir; you will have the goodness to accompany us to the council of war, which is now sitting, in expectation of your arrival.

Stein. Yes, yes; 'tis certainly some contract—Oh, Sir, they do me too much honor—but I am such a figure, that I really feel ashamed to—Permit me just to change—

First Officer. Upon these occasions the etiquette of dress is in general overlooked. You must remain, and affix seals to all the doors in our absence.

Second Officer. I'll see it done.

Stein. Seals upon my doors! what for?

First Officer. It is the custom with us, whenever we suspect a person of conveying information to our enemies.

Stein. I hope, gentlemen, you don't suspect me of such wickedness.

Second Officer. Oh, no; we don't suspect—we have proof.

Stein. Proof! oh, the malice of this world! Gentlemen, if you will but grant me a little time

time, you shall see how clearly I'll refute the charge and cover my enemies with confusion.

First Officer. Soldiers, though severe, are just—the opportunity of clearing yourself will not be wanting—but yours must be a most ingenious defence, to invalidate the powerful evidence contained in this epistle, which you have just confessed was written by yourself.

Stein. I made a mistake—'tis all a forgery ! I'll take my oath 'tis not my writing.

First Officer. Nay, nay ; there can be no mistake—you know you could swear to it by the A's and the G's.

Stein. It is a plot upon me.

First Officer. No one forms the letter A as you do.

Stein. Miserable man that I am ! why did I ever learn to write ?

First Officer. Away, away, away ! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—A Prison.

(*A lamp nearly extinguished ; day breaks gradually ; Bertha and Mrs. Melfort discovered in a large chair ; Bertha sleeping, and Mrs. Melfort quite exhausted with watching and fatigue ; Durimel on his knees. He rises and advances, looking frequently at Bertha.*)

Dur. Her heavy eyes, fatigued with weeping, yield at length to sleep : repose, sweet innocent ! forget thy griefs, and dream of happiness—she stirs ; no—still as death—I dread the moment of her waking ! Could I escape before—(*drum at a great distance*)—Hark ! I hear the

E

distant

distant drum calling the companies to the parade—how rapidly the hours have flown! Time seems to envy me the few moments yet in my possession, and with giant stride accelerates the approaching hour of my death—Bertha! dear Bertha! to part with thee is all I have to do; but 'tis a task so difficult, so dreadful—no; this instant will I fly, and spare us both unutterable torment (*going*).

Bertha (sleeping). Durimel! Durimel!

Dur. My love!—'twas but a dream; she smiles upon me—oh! do not smile, my angel! for if thou dost my fortitude forsakes me—Oh! how have I deserved these sufferings! No more shall the blest hours, sacred to the chastest tenderness, return; those which are to come belong to courage and to resignation—to courage? Alas! one moment still remains, enough to shake the firmest soul.—Oh, God! 'tis thou must strengthen me—thou knowest 'tis not the brilliant sun which I regret, the idle pleasures of a thoughtless world; but friendship, tenderness and love—the sentiments with which our natures sympathize—these are the charms that bind me to the earth, and render death so bitter.

Bertha (still sleeping). You are his king! you are a God! Disposer of lives! my husband! Pardon, pardon, or I expire at your feet! (*she screams and starts from the chair---Durimel catches her in his arms.*)

Mrs. Mel. My child!

Dur. My Bertha!

Ber. Where am I? Oh, unhappy Bertha!
—I thought I was upon my knees before thy sovereign; that sovereign thou hast so often

ten

ten called benevolent and merciful—I implored thy pardon—I obtained it—’twas but a dream; yet I will hail it as a happy omen of my husband’s safety—no; thou shalt not die; heaven does not will thy death, and thou shalt live for me.

Dur. Will this blow be the last!—Be calm, my love! Death has for me no terrors—for thee alone I fear---thy sufferings wound my soul! Hear me, Bertha; my father shortly will arrive, with him I must appear before my judges. He wishes to be private with me.

Ber. Private! must I then leave you?

Dur. But for a little—something, he said, he had to tell me, which might induce my judges to be merciful; then leave me, Bertha! for while thou art present my every thought is centered in thee! Ah! do weep.

Ber. How can I cease to weep? Is not thy life my own.

(*St. Franc appears behind, but seeing Bertha withdraws.*)

Dur. Madam, madam! separate us, I entreat you.

Ber. Oh! cruel, cruel.

Dur. Leave me, I conjure you.

Ber. I obey; but tell me, tell me, Durimel! dost thou still cherish hope?

Dur. I do, I do; forget not to offer up thy prayers in my behalf; thy virtue may disarm the angry power which threatens to destroy me.

Mrs. Mel. Come, my beloved child! let us retire and implore of heaven his pardon.

Ber.

Ber. Ay, there our earnest prayers will surely not be spurned; for thence alone can innocence obtain redress, when merciless, inexorable man denies it.

[*Exeunt Bertha and Mrs. Melfort.*]

Dur. I trembled lest they should stay—my father, as I think, appeared, but suddenly withdrew. Now, then, my soul, be firm; the moment is arrived—What they have seen of me is but a shadow—what they have yet to see will fill them with disgust and horror!—
(*Enter St. Franc.*)---Were you not here before, Sir?

St. Franc. I was; but waited the departure of thy wife. Give me thy hand; 'tis well---it does not tremble---thou know'st I come for thee.

Dur. I expected you much earlier---Is every thing prepared?

St. Franc. The regiment is on the parade, and a detachment waits to conduct you thither.

Dur. Let me entreat you, sir, to avoid this fight! I tremble for you.

St. Franc. Oh! heed me not; extreme misfortunes beget extreme courage.

Dur. Had it but pleased the great disposer of events to spare my life, to make me the comfort of your latter days---you weep---I have done---Oh! my dear sir, for the last time bless your unhappy son, and may heaven ratify the pardon which a father pronounces in its name. (*Kneels.*)

St. Franc. Thou hast my blessing, boy; and may the Father of all mercy open wide
his

his arms, and clasp thee to his breast as I now clasp thee.

Dur. Death is no longer dreadful. Come, father, let us bravely meet it.

St. Franc. My Son, I follow.

Enter Valcour.

Hold, my brave soldier ; there yet is hope : although my father has refused to grant the delay even of a few hours—though he rejects my prayers and is inflexible—yet if St. Franc will but consent, we still may save you.

St. Franc. Save him ! oh ! how ?

Val. If you have courage to embrace my project, I engage for its success—The regiment is already on the parade ; and the detachment which should conduct him thither waits at the great entrance of the prison—but, as you leave this dungeon, upon the left there is a passage leading to a private door, which opens on the public road—two faithful servants in whom I can confide are there in waiting with a carriage. This paper, signed by me, will serve him as a passport : then take it instantly, and let him choose his road.

St. Franc. What do you offer ! Have you no other means of safety ? Cruel Valcour ! think you I will consent that you should risk---

Val. Lose not the time in thinking of the dangers I incur---the enterprise I own is hardy, but it shall be accomplished : his situation interest me : my heart bleeds for him : yes, I have resolved to save him. Could I, think you, bear to see him thus perish in the flower of his youth---upon the eve of happiness too, when a beloved tender mistress stretches forth

her lovely arms, and hails him the husband of her choice?---Oh! no; I have been falsely thought the vile detested miscreant who betrayed him---why then do I delay an act of justice to myself?---let me this instant break his bonds, give him once more to freedom and his love; and prove, that though through thoughtlessness I may unconsciously give pain, I have a heart which never ceases to reproach me till the wrongs my folly has occasioned are redressed.

St. Franc. My friend! my dear friend! I admire your generous courage---I never can forget it.

Val. Why do you not profit by it?---my arms, this passport, my livery, all promise an easy and a safe retreat---Why, why, then, do you deliberate?

St. Franc. Oh! Heaven, support me---my friend will one day know this heart; and of what sacrifices it is capable---more, more than life is here concerned---thy carriage waits?---then leave us to decide---fly to thy post; thy absence will be marked; and I will follow---alone, or with my-----

Val. Is this a time for argument?---no, no; believe me 'tis not---each moment now is precious---here, here---take these (*giving purse and passport*)---no thanks---conduct him from his scene of horror, and may heaven favour his escape!

[*Exit Valcour.*

St. Franc.---after a pause---(*extending the purse to Durimel*). Charles? how do you decide?

Dur.

Dur. My fate is in your hands---whate'er you shall decree, your son will cheerfully obey.

St. Franc. Pronounce, my son, and save thy father.

Dur. Alas ! I dare not.

St. Franc. Oh ! Charles, can'st thou conceive how precious is to thee my life ?

Dur. How much more precious is to me your honor ! Was not my person delivered into your charge upon the faith of a promise ?---is not the sacred seal of an oath upon the trust ?

St. Franc. Oh ! Heaven ! it is.

Dur. The sacrifice of honour is not in our power.

St. Franc. How gladly would I here lay down my life to save thee.

Dur. My father's word, his faith, are pledged ; and he must not recede.

St. Franc. My son, my boy ! thou art the hero, and thy father but the man : I am, I will be so---my heart commands it---I have no other law---Come, come, my boy, and let me save thee.

Dur. Never ; you have given a sacred promise---I will perform it---believe me, sir, your son would rather suffer death with torture, than live to see his father's shame.

St. Franc. Thy life is now my only thought ; all other cares are lost in that ; fly then, this instant fly, and spare thy father---the dreadful spectacle of a lov'd son expiring at his feet---fly, fly---oh ! fly.

Dur. Think you I have so little profited by your instruction and example ?---think you me so debased to purchase life with your disgrace ?
—upon

---upon such terms existence would be hateful. Courage, dear father; I am well prepared; then, wherefore this delay? let us go forth, and with a noble firmness, the sure attendant upon upright minds, laugh at the terrors of approaching death. (*Going.*)

Enter Bertha.

Ber. Where are you going?---whither would you lead me?---think you, you can again deceive me?---I know what fate awaits him---my scattered strength returns, and I have flown to save him. Ah! whither do you fly?---into the cold embrace of death!---and you, cruel unnatural father! you, you conduct him to the fatal spot.

Dur. Cease, Bertha; cease this frantic grief---'tis fruitless; summon up all thy courage, love! for we must part.

Ber. Part! Oh, Heaven!---here---hide thee here: they cannot find you here: or, if they should, they will not tear thee hence; no, they dare not tear thee from thy fond Bertha's arms---My deep despair will touch their flinty hearts; my wild entreaties melt their ferocious souls; if these have no effect, my horrid screams will reach the throne of justice, and the red lightning of an angry God shall blast the inhuman butchers of their brethren, who thus would outrage love and nature.

Dur. Speak to her, sir: I cannot.

St. Frank. Daughter, forbear---

Ber. If my dear husband perish, what is the universe to me? Fortitude does not belong to me: my weakness is my only virtue. You may

may have courage—your love; I see it: it alarms me—it is full of terror: but surely you do not—no, you cannot love him with half the tenderness I feel.

St. Franc. Am I not his father? Who, then, shall vie with me in tenderness?—If I, worn out with sorrow and with age, am firm, command thy feelings also, and respect my misery.

Dur. Bertha—dear Bertha! the wild expressions of thy agony are poinards in the bosom of my father!

Ber. (kneeling.) Oh! pardon the disorder of a distracted wretch, who knows not what she utters—who, in her madness, may accuse e'en Heaven!—Ah! what paper have you there? It is my husband's pardon? Will he escape the dreadful sentence?

St. Franc. 'Tis not impossible, my child: but let the event be what it may, you must now quit this place. (*leads her to the opposite side of the stage*). My child, my child, let not an old man's tears be shed in vain! Leave him, I entreat you, to fulfil the sacred duties imposed by nature and by honor. This—this is the moment of their triumph.—Go—go, my child, and I will soon rejoin you.

Ber. With Durimel, my father?

Dur. (after a struggle.) Now! now! Bertha—my love—my wife—adieu!

[*Exit Durimel.*]

Ber. He's gone!—let go your hold—unhand me! Let me, for mercy's sake, once more behold him—Let me fly, and perish by his side!—He's gone—he's gone, and I shall never see him

him more ! Oh !—oh ! room for my heart !—
Oh ! Durimel—my love ! (*faints.*)

St. Franc. Within there ! help ! help ! help !

Enter Mrs. Melfort, followed by the Keeper of the prison.

Keeper. How now ! what's the matter ?

Mrs. Melf. Oh, my unhappy child ! look up and bless thy mother with some sign of life !

Dur. (*without.*) Why does my father tarry, when his son requires his aid ?

St. Franc. (*rushes out wildly.*) Charles—Charles I come !

Mrs. Melf. (*to the Keeper.*) Your arm, to lead her out.

Dur. (*without.*) Bertha !—my love—my wife ! eternally farewell !

[*Exeunt Mrs. Melfort, Bertha, and the Keeper.*]

SCENE III.—*The Parade.*

Halberds fixed—soldiers drawn up in expectation of Durimel on each side of the stage—Valcour and other Officers discovered at their head—muffled drums beat.

Val. (*aside.*) Oh ! heaven ! then he has not escaped.

PROCESSION.

When Durimel is in his place, and St. Franc falls on his neck, First Officer says to Valcour,

First Officer. What can this mean ? why all this interest for a stranger.

Val.

Val. Humane and generous he ever was--- yet I confess I know not to account for such unusual tenderness.

(Muffled drums beat. St. Franc starts wildly from the arms of Durimel, and rushes to the front of the stage.)

St. Franc. Now, spirits! rally round my heart—but for an instant bear me firmly up, and I no more shall need your aid.—Comrades! friends! brothers! it is decreed, that he who basely quits the colours of his country merits death---the wretched victim, who now kneels before you in awful expectation of his fate, regardless of the stern decree, most rashly has abandoned them; therefore, he—Oh! God! oh! God!—must I then struggle with the fondness thou hast placed about my heart, banish the father from my heaving breast, and trampling on the sacred laws of nature, pronounce the bloody sentence on my own son---horrible! horrible.

Val. St. Franc! my friend! ah! what means this deadly paleness on your cheek---this aimless motion of your eye? let not the generous pity pleading in your breast hurry you to the tomb with the unfortunate it is not in your power to save.

St. Franc. Oh! that it were within my power! with rapture would I open all these veins; let gush the purple stream that rolls within them, and, to preserve existence to him, exhaust the spring from which it flowed.

Val.

Val. How wild is this discourse.

St. Franc. (after a pause). Ha! it shall be so.

Val. Pray, pray be calm.

St. Franc (falling on his knees).

Kind heaven! I thank thee—thou hast, in mercy, sent my better angel forth--'tis he inspires the thought.

(Muffled drums beat a short roll.)

The signal beats; then we'll be brief---Advance, ye ministers of justice; ye, whose fatal arms link time and dread eternity together, advance! prepare! now fire!

(*St. Franc throws himself before the body of his son. During this speech the six soldiers destined to shoot him advance, kneel, and point their guns; but recover arms as soon as Valcour speaks.*)

Val. Hold! hold! what may this mystery mean?

Durimel (having disengaged himself from the halberds and lifted the bandeau from his eyes).

My father faints; fly, fly to his assistance.

(*Soldiers assist to recover St. Franc.*)

Val. Great heaven! his father!

Sr.

St. Franc. Let go your hold—no power on earth shall force me to it (*starts up.*) What! barbarians! would you coldly stare, and see a father murder his own son? yes, fellow-soldiers, know he is my son; then save, or strike us both (*falls exhausted into his son's arms, and soldiers form a group round him.*)

Val. Heroic virtue! why, why was this concealed? give him all help; suspend awhile the fatal ceremony—for, if my hopes prove true, I yet may bring them pardon.

[*Exit Valcour.*]

(*The scene encloses the others.*)

SCENE—*Mrs. Melfort's House.*

*Bertha recovering----**Mrs. Melfort watching her.*

Ber. Oh! my mother, are you too their accomplice? Where is my husband? Speak, oh speak.

Mrs. Melf. Spare me, my child; oh, spare thy mother.

Ser. Alas! will no one look with pity on my sufferings? They are inexpressible—my mother hears me not, consoles me not—where am I? A heavy mist obscures each object—help, help me or I die. (*she nearly faints, when a roll of the drum makes her start from the seat.*) Ah! what is that? Mother! did you not hear the formidable sound? Should it be—it is, it must be so—oh! let me fly and pierce through all their files—let me but see

F

him

him once—oh! let him, let him hear my last adieu.

Mrs. Melf. Alas! it is too late.

Ber. Too late! oh, God! there is no hope?

Mrs. Melf. None but in heaven, poor unhappy Bertha!

Ber. Is he then abandoned? Left to perish? Why am I detained? (*drum rolls again.*) It sounds again, and thunder rolls not so awful on the ear—Ah! now I see him, the fatal fillet on his brow—horrible moment! it sounds no more—oh! mournful, death-like silence! (*Several guns fired at once, after which Bertha exclaims "Durimel!" and swoons; then roll of drums till she recovers.*)

Mrs. Melf. My child! my hope, revive! thou art the only consolation left, and canst thou thus abandon me?

Enter Valcour.

Assist me, sir, to raise her from the earth.

Val. Soft: she recovers—look up, look up, dear lady, and view the harbinger of joy.

Ber. Where is my husband now?

Enter St. Franc and Durimel, who runs and embraces Bertha.

St. Franc. Here, here, my child; restored once more to liberty and thee.

Mrs. Melf. Good heaven!

Ser. Oh! joy unutterable; but how, which way do I regain thee?

Dur.

Dur. Behold my guardian angel (*pointing to Valcour*) ; he it was whose generous pity saved me—then kneel, my Bertha, kneel with me, and join to thank him for thy husband's life.

Val. Nay ; to your venerable father yield those thanks which your mistaken gratitude now pays to me—his magnanimity it was prevailed ; that, that alone drew tears of pity down my stern father's cheek, quelled his unjust resentment, and, to the arms of a distracted wife, restor'd a lov'd, a happy husband.

Ser. Did I then fancy the report of guns ?

Dur. The firing you heard, was a respect paid by the soldiers to our beloved father ; thus were the arms intended to destroy your husband, discharged in joy for his deliverance.

St. Franc. Justice has laid her iron rod aside, and yields her throne to Mercy ; who, with a milder sceptre reigning, spreads joy and happiness around.—One fear alone remains to damp them—the fear of your displeasure (*to the audience*) : let it not hang with fullen influence over us, but kindly banish it with your applause.

THE END.



EPILOGUE.

“WHEN some rich squire to Hymen tells his woe;
“ As forth from church the wedded couple go,
“ To grace the scene and glad the honest people
“ He bids the ringers shake with peals the steeple;
“ Then jovial cries, ‘Let these good folks be treated!
“ May my example often be repeated.’
“ So, when the bard has toil’d his last act through,
“ And husbanded, or halter’d all the crew;
“ His hero married, and dispatch’d his rogue—
“ Jingling like bells, appears the Epilogue.
“ But say (to make the simile complete)
“ Our good example when shall *We* repeat?
“ May we again renew our scenes of horror,
“ ‘To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow?’
“ Again our Point of Honor boldly try,
“ And either nobly live, or bravely die:
“ ‘Hold, madam, hold! A truce with your petition—
“ Explain your terms,’ exclaims some sour logician;
“ And tell, ere you denote your ‘high behests,’
“ On what the real Point of Honor rests.’
The Point of Honor, says an ancient wight,
Is to abhor what’s wrong, and do what’s right:
True: but the mischief is, the giddy throng
Will jumble wrong with right, and right with wrong.

Time

EPILOGUE.

Time was, when burning for the public weal,
With coat of mail, and pantaloons of steel,
O'er hill and dale, the hero made a rout,
And while he laid about him, thought, no doubt,
Nature form'd heads, by way of amorous token,
Like curious mottos, only to be broken.
But in our days this race is nearly lost ;
By cruel laws and sad misfortunes cross'd.
A modern hero thinks, when lost his self,
His Point of Honor is to lose himself:
So mounts his steed, resolv'd on deeds of death,
And tilts at all he meets on Hounslow Heath:
There cas'd in steel, fir knight concludes his glory ;
Rear'd high in air—a sad *memento mori*.
The Point of Honor!—idle he who tries
To catch the dazzling meteor as it flies,
'Tis now a horse-race for a thousand pound—
And now an axle-tree that sweeps the ground ;—
An honest country quiz to crack one's wit on—
A crowded court, without a chair to sit on.
The Point of Honor veers as fashion goes,
And turns to more points than the compass knows ;
Save in one instance ; when sedition's band,
With foreign crimes would stain this happy land :
Bound in her union, Britain wards the blow,
And points the sword against the general foe.
“ Ye noble dames, who brave the sultry weather
“ In sociables unsociably together,
“ And ye of humbler sort, who take the air
“ With loving spouse, wedg'd in a one-horse chair ;
“ And cry, in gathering clouds, as on ye move,
“ ‘ What dust we doat on when 'tis man we love !’

“ O may

EPILOGUE.

"O may that sun which warms your outward sense

"Awaken here your kind benevolence."

To you our Author makes his last appeal—

To you he boldly trusts—for you can feel.

There is a point (he shows it in his play)

When rigid justice gives to fondness way:

Crimes which a father now abhors—approves—

Blames as a man, and as a parent loves.

Such is our Author's fate; his muse, to-night,

On timorous wings has tried her maiden flight.

Faults which your cooler judgment may espy

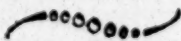
He views, alas! with all a parent's eye:

His Point of Honor, ere he gains the gaol,

Turns like the needle trembling to the pole;

And wavering waits the issue of the cause;

Chill'd by your frowns, or cheer'd by your applause.





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